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C.I.A. Station Chief Slain Near Athens by Gunmen

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Special to The New York Times

ATHENS, Wednesday, Dec. 24—The station chief of the Central Intelligence Agency in Greece was shot and killed last night by unidentified gunmen outside his home in an Athens suburb.

The station chief, Richard S. Welch, had attended a Christmas party at the residence of the American Ambassador, Jack B. Kubisch. He had just stepped out of his car about 10 P.M. when three masked gunmen fired three shots at him and sped away, according to a spokesman for the American Embassy.

Mr. Welch was taken to a local hospital, where he died several minutes later. Mr. Welch's wife, who was with him when he was shot,

was unhurt, the spokesman said. The station chief, who was officially listed as a special assistant to the Ambassador, arrived in Greece within the last six months. He lived in a house in the suburb of Paleo Psychico, that had been used by many of his C.I.A. predecessors.

The American Embassy issued the following statement:

"The American Embassy confirmed tonight that Mr. Richard S. Welch, an officer of the embassy, was shot and killed by unidentified assailants in front of his residence earlier this evening.

"The embassy is cooperating

with the Greek authorities in investigating the matter. The embassy declined to give any further details pending the results of the investigation and until the next of kin have been notified."

An English language daily, The Athens News, recently printed a list of the top C.I.A. officials in Greece, along with their addresses and telephone numbers. The paper said it had received the information from a group calling itself the Committee of Greeks and Greek Americans.

The committee's statement referred to the "destructive activities" and "evil work" of the C.I.A., and said it had collected its information partly by following and observing agency officials here in Athens.

List of Soviet Agents Rejected The report prompted another group to send the paper a list allegedly containing the names of Soviet intelligence agents in Greece, but the paper refused to print it.

Mr. Welch, 46 years old, was an amiable man with a trim white mustache and the manners of a tweedy college professor. This correspondent chatted with him at Ambassador Kubisch's residence about an hour before the shooting.

When the subject of Cyprus came up, Mr. Welch mentioned that he had served on the island in the early 1960's, during the first round of fighting between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. "I started the whole thing," he joked. Then some Greek dancing began and he went over to watch.

Large Operation in Greece

The Central Intelligence Agency has maintained a large operation in Greece, which shares borders with three Communist countries—Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia—and fought a civil war against Communist guerrillas in the late 1940's. It is the general practice for the station chief to have official cover as a diplomat, but his identity is usually well-known.

In recent years the C.I.A. has been subject to virulent criticism here, mainly from leftist political factions. The agency is widely blamed, without proof, for helping to engineer the coup in 1967 that initiated more than seven years of military rule in Greece. Many of the leaders of the coup, including George Papadopoulos, who later proclaimed himself President, served in Greek intelligence and reportedly had close ties to the C.I.A.

Critics also charged that the agency was somehow involved in the coup that temporarily deposed Archbishop Makarios, a

spiratorial atmosphere of Greek politics, the agency has been blamed for a variety of incidents, and almost every American here has been suspected—at one time or another—of being an agent.

U. S. Journal Named Welch

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23—Mr. Welch was identified as a C.I.A. clandestine operative last summer by Counterspy, a quarterly Washington publication that came out of the war resistance movement three years ago.

Winslow Peck, one of five people who write and edit Counterspy, said in a telephone interview that Counterspy had listed Mr. Welch as a C.I.A. operative in Peru, where, according to the State Department Biographic Directory, he served from 1972 to early this year.

Mr. Peck said that he and his Counterspy colleague, Tim Butz, had intelligence experience in the Air Force. He said the third Counterspy reporter involved in identifying Mr. Welch and others was Doug Porter, a California journalist.

The C.I.A. declined comment on any aspect of the reports.

According to the State Department Biographic Register Mr. Welch was born Dec. 14, 1929, in Connecticut and was graduated from Harvard in 1951.

He is listed as having been an economic analyst in the Pentagon from 1951 to 1960, when he was assigned as an economic officer for four years to Nicosia, Cyprus. He was assigned to Guatemala in 1966, in 1966, in Guyana in 1967 and, after three years in Washington to Peru.

The State Department Register lists him as a foreign service reserve officer, a familiar listing for C.I.A. operatives attached to embassies.

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